

The Philosophy of Content

How immeasurably might we add to our peace if we could realize in a practical way the Bible philosophy of content. How our worries, our cares, our perplexities would disappear like morning mist before the rising sun, and a sweet peace return to our souls like a heavenly benediction. "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content." "Take no thought for the morrow." "Cast all your care upon him who careth for you. Precept is heaped upon precept to coax us away from the burdens which we persist in carrying as if they were the blessing instead of the bane of our lives. This content of the Bible is not the content of indolence or of lethargy. Far otherwise; it is the content which comes of the right placing of the responsibility for results. It argues this way: I will do my duty, I will improve my opportunity; these things come within the limits of my power, but results belong to God. This we see in an argument which stimulates energy, for if results belong to God, and if I trust God with results, there is no room for discouragement, no room for doubt, and no possibility of failure in the final sense. The failures which come to this trust are not real failures, but successes in the disguise of failures. The best thing happens. "All things work together for good." Take this view point of life, and behold you are standing at the brink of the river of peace; you are journeying on its broad bosom; you have found the golden age; you are sweeping into the triumph and the glory.

A Plea for Separation

In the third chapter of Malachi the prophet sets forth the rebellion, the sacrilege and infidelity of the people who professed to be children of God. He describes a condition of society when it was impossible to discriminate between those who served God and those who served him not, and in the same text prophesies the return of the day when there shall be a separation between the people of God and the people of the world. He says: "Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." It is indeed a sad state of human society when the faculty of moral discrimination becomes so blunted as to be unable to distinguish between right and wrong, but it is sadder yet when the church becomes so worldly that the keenest eye cannot discern between "him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Who is able in these days to distinguish between the people of God and the people of the world? The line of demarcation "is faint, obscure and not easily definable." When the church becomes worldly and the world endeavors to become "churchly" there is a double confusion. Unregenerate professors in the church make Christianity disreputable, while moral, upright, charitable men outside the church make worldliness more respectable, and thus the line of separation between the church and the world is practically obliterated.

This should not be so, for God has decreed eternal separation between those who are his and those who belong to the world. "Come out from among them and be ye separate" is the law of all holy life, not necessarily separation from the society of the ungodly but separate in purity of

heart, in holiness of living, in thought, in word, in action, in our aims and object and purpose. Christ "came not to send peace but a sword," that is the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. This word is sharper than any two-edged sword dividing asunder members of the same family and setting them at variance because holiness and sin are at war. The gospel makes for peace only when its terms of peace are accepted. Lack of holiness of heart with the consequent lack of holiness of life is the one cause of the slight contrast between the children of light and the children of darkness. God meant that the two should be separate, and personal holiness only can draw the needed line of separation and fix the great gulf between the righteous and the wicked. Says Doctor Pierson: "It is in vain to try to fence in the church and fence out the world by an arbitrary and artificial paling; or to prop up such a fence by ecclesiastical legislation or discipline." No peculiar style of dress will separate us from the world but holiness of heart will. Let us lift high the banner of King Immanuel bearing the words, "Holiness and Service," and upon the heart and brow of every disciple and even upon the bells of the horses let there be inscribed, "Holiness unto the Lord."

The One Thing Needful

"Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature in Christ Jesus." Here is the soul of true religion. It is not merely the main thing, it is everything. And yet how strangely inverted is our sense of proportion between this "one thing needful," and the "many things" which constitute our religious formula. The latter we magnify. We are perfectly clear, perfectly certain about them, while in regard to the weightiest matter, the one vital, solemn, eternal question of the new, Christ life in us, we are uncertain, dim, perplexed, like one wandering about in a fog. "Do you believe in this, that and the other doctrine?" "Why, yes, certainly; nothing could be plainer." What certitude, what sublime confidence in this reply. "Are you a Christian?" To this a faltering, hesitating, poor, weak, dejected, uncertain, unhappy, "I hope so."

Works Both Ways

Young men of even questionable habits think too much of themselves and their reputation to be seen walking on the street with women who are slightly intoxicated. Why should they expect respectable young ladies to associate with them when at times they become beastly drunk? When our girls once refuse to tolerate in young men what young men will not tolerate in young ladies, the standard of morality will be greatly raised. The gospel knows but one morality for men and women. "In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female."

We can not see God with the natural eye nor can we hear him with the natural ear, but we can call upon him and by faith and in believing love look up to him and hear his voice and feel his touch. Oh, that we could recognize more fully the presence of God. He is in the world, has been in the world from the beginning of time, will be in the world not only to the end of time but thru eternity.